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EDITORIAL NOTES.

With this issue the tenth volume of your JOURNAL is closed and another year ended. Whether the net result of the year of work and of publication be good or bad, it is finished and put away with the things that have been. The JOURNAL, this last year, has printed more matter, more original papers and, we think, better papers, than in any previous year. As nearly everything that we published is produced by California physicians, the JOURNAL, to a large extent, reflects the productivity and the value of the product, of California doctors. The better your work and the more carefully you prepare your papers, the better will be the JOURNAL and the more credit will it reflect upon the medical profession of California and its state organization. In saying good-by to the volume and to the year, the editor wishes to take the opportunity of extending his sincere and personal thanks to all those who have contributed and to all those who have helped so greatly with the year's work; the year has gone quickly and smoothly and there has been a pleasant feeling of co-operation. It is impossible to be an editor of anything and not offend some people and hurt other people's feelings; your editor is sorry that this has to be so and in wishing a "Merry Christmas" to you all, he extends his regrets to those who may think that they have had cause to be offended. May we all have a very Merry Christmas and a pleasant holiday and then buckle down to making the next year not only a "Happy New Year" but a better one and a more prosperous one.

About the middle of October the President of the State Society, Dr. O. D. Hamlin, sent to the president and secretary of each county medical society in the state, a very important letter. The matters presented have been carefully considered for a long time and the letter was not sent out until the whole question had been discussed with a number of members and with the Council. The following is the text of the President's message and it should furnish food for thought for all of us:

October 12, 1912.

From the President

To all County Medical Societies,

My Dear Colleagues:—

The important matters herein presented for your earnest consideration were considered by your Council at a meeting held September 25th, 1912, and your Council agreed in all particulars with the views of your President.

In the Legislature that will meet in January, 1913, there will be a number of men who have openly stated that they will do all in their power to oppose public health legislation, to do away with much of the existing laws guarding public health and to so lower and weaken the standards required to practice medicine as to practically eliminate all present safeguards and permit any and all unqualified persons, quacks, etc., to settle in California and prey upon our people without violating any law.

You should do everything in your power to make it clear to the business interests of your community that retrogressive legislation of this sort will, in a short time, mean disaster and widespread disease; that epidemics mean a tremendous loss of money and insufficient public health control will mean a certain and sure increase of disease, notably smallpox, typhoid, etc. And also, that lowered standards of medical licensure, special boards for special cults, unlimited and uncontrolled reciprocity will mean an enormous influx of unqualified practitioners and quacks who will be a disgrace to the state and a menace to its people.

If business men can be made to see clearly what the situation will be and to what extent this lowering of medical and public health standards will injure the state financially, their influence with the legislature or with the Governor may be sufficient to curb or counteract this dangerous activity which now threatens the State of California.

If medical standards are to be lowered, or special boards of licensure for special cults created (which will mean the same thing), then the only hope for preserving any respect for our profession in the minds of the better and clearer thinking class of people will be found in our County Medical Societies.

In admitting new members, their professional and moral qualifications should be closely scanned; QUALITY OF MEMBER-

SHIP must be the important consideration from now on.

Every County Society should increase its scientific work to a maximum and every member should participate in it to the end that our members shall keep constantly up-to-date and be constantly improving themselves.

The people of your community should be taught that your Medical Society is a scientific school of medicine; that the work of the Society is for the betterment of its members and their increased ability to care for their patients professionally; that the badge of membership means identification of the holder as a reputable, upright, well qualified practitioner of medicine, recognized as such by his colleagues all over the state.

If the Legislature is bent upon destroying the legal safeguards of the people against quacks, let us, through our County Societies, provide to the limit of our ability a moral safeguard in the shape of membership in such societies.

With the best wishes for the success of your endeavors in these directions, and with the earnest hope that you may be energetic for the right and for improvement and for the protection of public health, I remain,

Respectfully yours,

O. D. HAMLIN, M. D., President.

A meeting of the secretaries of state medical organizations was held in Chicago, October 23 and

NOTABLE MEETING.

24, 1912, that was in many ways the most remarkable medical meeting ever held. It was called by the Committee on Uniform Membership, of the American Medical Association, under approval of the Board of Trustees, and the actual traveling expenses of the secretaries were paid by the Association. When the roll was called it was found that 38 states were represented, indicating pretty conclusively a widespread interest in the problems presented by the work of medical organizations and a serious determination to attempt to solve them. The work of the past was reviewed and the difficulties that exist under present chaotic conditions were summarized in eight questions which were discussed by all present. The sessions lasted for two days and an abstract of the meeting will be found on another page in this issue of the JOURNAL. Such a meeting might well be held every year and thus our various medical organizations be brought into closer touch.

Nearly every state medical organization that has a medical defense feature has noted, in the last

MEDICAL DEFENSE.

year or year and a half, a marked increase in the number of alleged malpractice suits that are being brought against physicians. The last report in New York contains the following: "The reason why a larger number of cases have been brought this year than for many years past, I

cannot satisfactorily explain except in one case * * ." In Kentucky conditions are evidently much the same for in the report for 1912 the recommendation is made that the assessment for medical defense be increased from 50c to \$1.00 per member and it is prophesied that the work for the next year will be much more expensive than in the past. The following portion of the Kentucky report is well worth careful thought:

"We would especially advise the doctor to be guarded in handling all cases as the tendency to sue is becoming more common especially in fractures. In fracture cases it is well to follow the example of a certain doctor. He always asks for a consultant. One patient said to him, 'Why is it, Doctor, that you always ask for another doctor in these cases?' The doctor's reply was, 'If things go wrong you would have a dozen lawyers.' On account of the frequency of suits for malpractice, our responsibility has increased and we should not hesitate to call a consultant or be watchful of all facts pertaining to treatment and management of these cases. Let me remind you that all cases are not surgical, the general practitioner is suffering most."

The same thing is as true in California as it is in New York or Kentucky; malpractice suits are rapidly increasing in number. Is it another expression of the feeling of antagonism to all things medical? Is it another evidence of the general feeling of unrest, of rebellion against any sort of control or supervision and especially intellectual or scientific control? It would seem so. The suggestion to have always a consultant in these cases is good and it would not be a bad idea for the State Society to make a rule that no case of alleged malpractice based on the treatment of a fractured bone would be defended by the Society unless the physician in charge had had a consultant in the treatment of the case.

Above all things, watch your words. Do not criticize the work of your fellow physician; it may start a suit. Walk carefully and considerably lest you also become the target for malicious abuse and unfair criticism.

Elsewhere in this issue we publish a letter from our Attorney in Los Angeles, Mr. Morrow, to-

DOCTOR OR DANGER?

gether with some portions of the testimony of a physician in a suit for alleged malpractice which we are defending in the South. A physician with the high degree of ignorance demonstrated by this man's testimony, is a menace to the community. It is an outrage that a reputable physician's professional standing may, at any time, be jeopardized and the Society put to a large expense, by the criticism and the testimony of such an ignoramus. A man practicing medicine—yet ignorant, according to his own testimony, of the anatomy of one of the joints most frequently injured! Do not fail to look up the transcript of this testimony and read it carefully.